

Speech by Mr. Bernt Carlsson, General Secretary of Socialist International, held on March 20, 1981:

Chairman, comrades,

May I begin by expressing on behalf of comrade Willy Brandt, the President of Socialist International, the sincere greetings and best wishes for the success of this Conference and for the work of M.E.P. of Aruba, which, as you know, is one of our newest member parties.

The Socialist International has under the leadership of Willy Brandt decided to expand its activities, to change its role from being mainly a Europe centred organization, to becoming truly an international International.

This change took place five years ago in 1976 at the Congress in Geneva when Willy Brandt was elected President of the Socialist International.

The Socialist International has its roots in Europe. It is the oldest international political organization, founded by Karl Marx in London in 1864 and it is now also the largest international political organization.

The socialist movement began in Western Europe because industrialization started in Western Europe. As a consequence, the working class as a social force, first emerged in Western Europe. That is also the area in which it first got organized. That is where the Socialist parties and the Social Democratic parties originated and also the trade union movement.

The world has changed enormously since the 1860s. Yet the Socialist International somehow was caught in ~~its~~ own forms of work, which concentrated its activities and its programs on the problem of Europe and on the problem of the labour movement in Europe.

The policy outlined by Willy Brandt was that the Socialist International should especially concentrate ~~its~~ efforts in the Third World.

Two areas in the Third World were chosen as priority areas.

One is Latin America, including the Caribbean, the other one is South Africa.

We are also trying to strengthen our work in other parts of the Third World, as Asia.

In the strategy of the Socialist International, a special emphasis has recently been given to our policies as regards Central America and the Caribbean.

It is very essential to stress that when we speak about our activities in Latin America and the Caribbean, it does not mean that Europeans are expanding their political activities into other parts of the third world.

On the contrary, within the Socialist International itself the role of the parties of the Third World has been strengthened

It is the parties from the Third World which direct the line concerning our work in the Third World.

The Socialist International is a very large organization. It is made up of 76 member organizations. These member organizations represent more than 15 million organized party members and we are backed by a total of more than 80 million voters. We are in power in 16 countries, that is we represent 16 governments.

The expansion of the Socialist International in recent years has mainly or almost exclusively taken place in areas outside of Europe, as was indicated by the fact that at our latest Congress all of the 8 new member parties including M.E.P. of Aruba and M.A.N. of Curacao are parties which are situated in the Third World.

It is in view of the interests of these parties that the International has decided to concentrate the attention to the situation in Central America and the Caribbean.

The first case where the Socialist International engaged itself very strongly was regarding Nicaragua. From 1978 when the heroic liberation struggle led by the Sandinista Movement finally got underway, the Socialist International supported this liberation struggle. This concerns not only the International as such but also our member parties, as for example, the Accion Democratica of Venezuela. In the time when Carlos Andres Perez was the President of Venezuela, it was one of the countries which gave the strongest support to the liberation struggle in Nicaragua.

Our support for the liberation struggle in Nicaragua is sometimes being criticized by people who now prefer to be or claim to be very interested in the situation of human rights in Nicaragua.

But we would like to ask them one question. Where was their interest in human rights in Nicaragua in the time of Somoza? Where was their interest in human rights in the 50 years of dictatorship, characterised by terror and brutal suppression, when Nicaragua was governed by the various members of the family Somoza?

The Socialist International has also, from the beginning, followed with great interest, sympathy and support, the liberation struggle, which was carried out by the New Jewel Movement of Grenada. We expressed our support when they finally managed to oust the Gairy dictatorship. We have since then been welcoming the New Jewel Movement, led by Maurice Bishop, as a member in the family of democratic-socialist and social democratic parties which make up the Socialist International.

Some people have tried to question the legitimate rights of the New Jewel Movement to call themselves democratic socialists.

These people who have appointed themselves as experts on human rights in Grenada, however, do forget one thing. They did not raise the question of human rights in Grenada at the time of the Gairy dictatorship. Their interest for promoting human rights in Grenada only awoke when the New Jewel Movement finally had managed to oust the dictatorship and to start working for the establishment of social democracy in Grenada.

The Socialist International now follows with sympathy and very strong support the liberation struggle carried out in El Salvador by our comrades of FDR. We also note that Guillermo Ungo recently was elected as President of the F.D.R. (Frente Democratico Revolucionario).

The role of the Socialist International in El Salvador has been criticized by some people as a form for interference. This is a distortion of the situation. We are engaged in the liberation struggle of El Salvador at the request of our member party MNR and at the request of Guillermo Ungo who is the leader of F.D.R.

The ones who are interfering from the outside in the liberation struggle in El Salvador is the country which started the whole process of sending weapons from abroad and that country as everyone knows is the United States. They are the ones who initiated the foreign military interference. They are the ones who have been sending military advisors to El Salvador. They are the ones whom we ask to stop this interference, to stop the sending of weapons, to stop the sending of advisors. We also state that all foreign interference in the struggle in El Salvador should stop.

In this Congress here we have also as one of the guests comrade Carlos Gallardo from the Social Democratic Party of Guatemala. The Socialist International reiterates its support for the liberation struggle in Guatemala. We realize this is one of the most difficult struggles carried out in all Latin-American countries. Because what our comrades in Guatemala are up against, is a type of government which is so reactionary and so backward that they do not even accept the system of parties in a modern sense. They do not only persecute the Left, they also persecute the Christian Democratic Party. The Socialist International stands for the right of all political parties in Guatemala to strive for a change in their country.

The Socialist International will continue to monitor the developments in Latin America.

We cannot accept the thinking which is prevalent in some quarters that Latin America is the special property of a certain great nation.

The comrades in the Socialist International which is responsible for this monitoring work are the leaders of our member parties in the region. It is not a question of a European interference.

The Socialist International member parties in the Caribbean and Latin America have been organized in a special committee which is called the Socialist International Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, led by Pena Gomez and with Hector Ogueli as the Secretary and with a number of outstanding leaders as Carlos Andres Perez, O'Brien Trotts, Anselmo Sule and Daniel Oduber to mention a few as Vice Chairmen.

It is the responsibility of this Committee to give the guidelines for the work of Socialist International in the region. But it can never be considered as the monopoly of Latin Americans to be interested in the affairs of Latin America. Respect for human rights is universal concern. It's enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. It is not only the right of all but the obligation of all to monitor and to follow the situations of human rights in all parts of the world.

Equally it is the right and also the obligation of all to monitor the developments in terms of irradiating poverty, promoting a North-South dialogue outlined by Willy Brandt in his capacity as chairman of the independent North-South committee.

The Socialist International is of the opinion that human rights, freedom and independence are concepts which apply to all nations of the world. It also applies to countries in Asia and it especially applies to Afghanistan.

May I use this opportunity, comrade chairman, to reiterate what the Socialist International Congress said in its Congress resolution which was unanimously adopted, including with the votes of all member parties in Latin America and the Caribbean, at our Congress in Madrid last year.

The Socialist International is shocked and disappointed that the Soviet Union has failed to respond to calls for the withdrawal of its occupation forces from Afghanistan and respect for that country's independence and non-alignment.

Democratic socialists the world over reaffirm this support for the Vienna statement of the party leaders conference of the Socialist International.

In particular it calls for the withdrawal of Soviet forces and it is called for the support of the Afghan people.

Equally the Socialist International calls for the respect of human rights and independence in Africa.

These last weeks the armed forces of South Africa have attacked two of its neighbours, Mozambique and Angola, with a direct intention of destroying the basis of the liberation movements in Southern Africa and in Namibia, especially the African National Conference in South Africa and the South-west Africans Peoples Organization in Namibia.

The Socialist International will continue its work of supporting the liberation struggle in the Third World. We will continue to do so on the basis of the policies which have been laid down by the Congress of the Socialist International, the one held in Geneva in 1976, in Vancouver in 1978 and in Madrid in 1980. We will especially continue our work here in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Among the parties which have initiated this great change in our policies, the Accion Democratica of Venezuela has a special place. It is this party which took the initiative to the Conference held in 1976 in May in Caracas. From this famous Caracas Conference came the engagement of the Socialist International for Latin America and the Caribbean, which was manifested six months later at the Geneva Congress and which is now continuing.

The Socialist International appreciates that one of our member parties, the MEP of Aruba, under the leadership of Betico Croes, has taken the initiative in calling this Conference.

The Socialist International will expand, not only by holding jointly large meetings of either a regional or global character, but also by our member parties themselves increasing their bilateral and regional contacts.

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